



Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

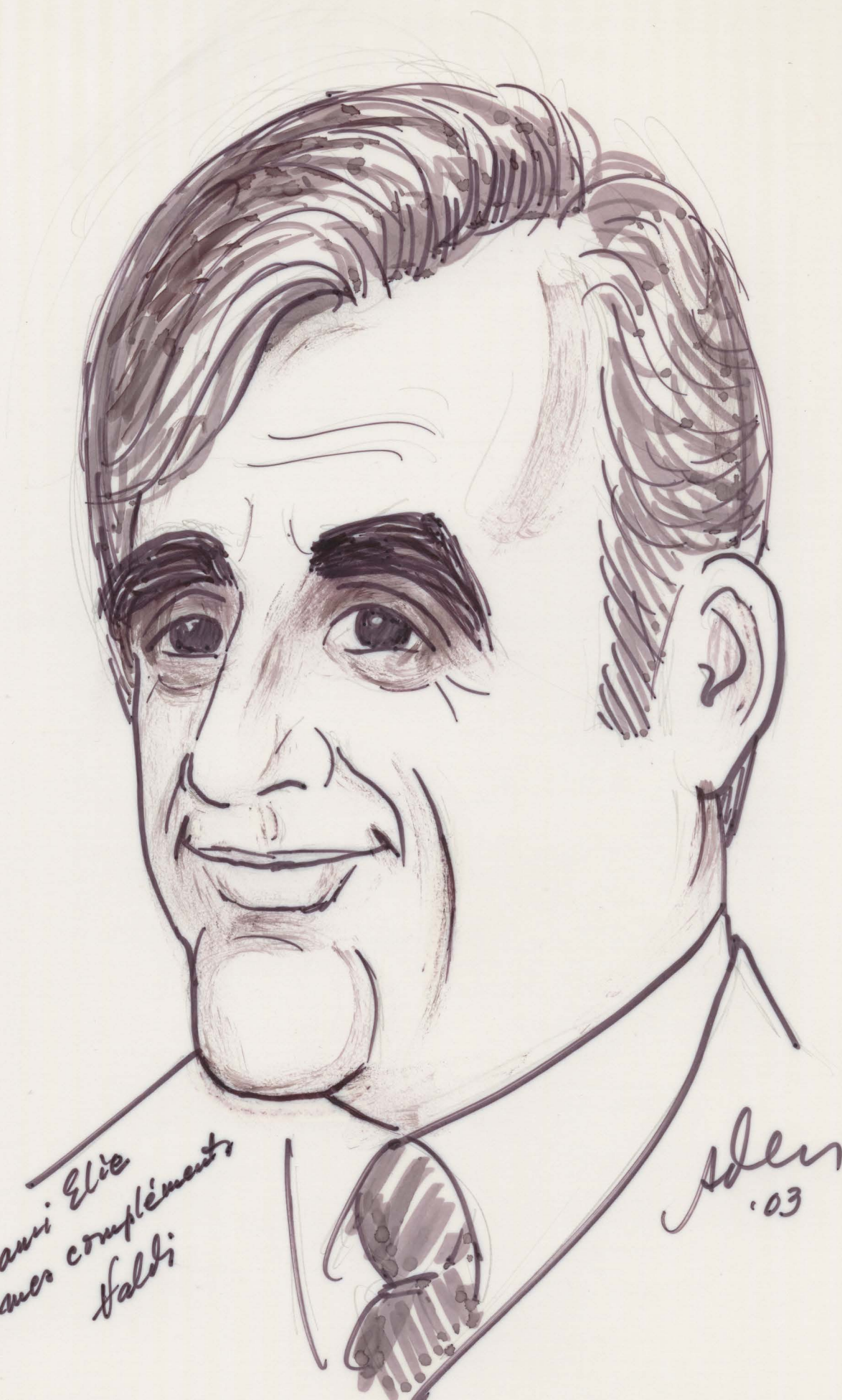
Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Library respects the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection. The Library holds the rights and permissions to put this material online. If you hold an active copyright to this work and would like to have your materials removed from the web please contact the USHMM Library by phone at 202-479-9717, or by email at digital_library@ushmm.org.



WOLF ADLER

MEMOIRS
OF
AN ARTIST
OF
LIFE



A mon ami Elie
avec mes compléments
Saluti

Adler
'03

WOLF ADLER

MEMOIRS
OF
AN ARTIST
OF
LIFE

© 2003 Wolf Adler

File Copy: 4/13/03
CC: D. Adler

WOLF ADLER

MEMOIRS OF AN ARTIST OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Having survived the atrocities committed by the Nazis (nothing compared to other holocaust survivors), I thought that I was immune to any more tragedies that might occur in my life. I was wrong.

Besides the wonderful times that I have had so far in my life, there have been many unhappy , and even tragic times, some almost as disastrous as losing my family in Auschwitz. (I'm only sorry that I never told anyone of them how much I loved them).

As life goes on, I tried to make the best of it; to achieve high standards in my careers, without causing harm to anyone, as my parents taught me. I know that I have made mistakes in my life, but I'm not sorry, as I learned from them.

MY CHILDHOOD

I was born January 29, 1924 in the small Transilvanian town of Sighet, Romania. Before the first World War it belonged to Austro-Hungary. The name Sziget (as it is spelled in Hungarian), means "Island" in Hungarian and is named such because it is surrounded by two rivers at the foot of the Carpatian mountains. Between the first and second world wars Transilvania belonged to Romania, but in 1940 it reverted to Hungary. Before the second world war ended, Transilvania was returned to Romania.

Of the population of 30,000 in Sighet, about half were Jewish. Before the war Romanians, Hungarians and Jews all lived in harmony. The town prospered with all kind of stores and there were cultural activities and thirty synagogues.

My sister Serena (Shoshana, her Hebrew name) and I were the only children of Eugene and Margaret Adler. Our grand parents of both sides had large families and lived in spacious homes. Though our family lived more modestly, we were comfortable. My father's parents, Pinkas and Regina Adler, owned a kosher restaurant and tavern. Zaide (grandfather) Adler was an important member of the Jewish community, and a hassid (devotee) of the Rebbe of Kosov. My mother's parents Izidor (Yisroel Leib, his Hebrew name) and Blanca Perl were once well to do when they were in the lumber business, but they lost their wealth during the depression. Zaide Perl was a hassid of the Rebbe of Vizsnits.

Every year before the holidays the Kosover rebbe used to come to Sighet for a week and stayed at Pinkas Adler's house with his entourage; his Gabbe

(manager) and his Shames (valet). They stayed in the guest rooms in the back of the house.

At the rear of the court yard behind my grandfather's tavern, restaurant and house there was a huge hall which was used by the boot makers guild once a month to exhibit and sell boots to the peasants. That's where the Kosover Rebbe used to have big banquets on his last night in Sighet. As a yearly tradition, all his hassidim (devotees) with their families (several hundred people) brought dishes, which the Rebbe blessed and had a taste (shraim). During the meal there was a celebration, and singing Hassidic songs. I used to sit next to the Rebbe and sing along.

The next morning the Rebbe would receive couples in my grand-parents' bedroom. As a favorite child, I was the only one allowed to be present. There was a long line of people stretching all the way through the big yard into the street. The townspeople wrote their problems on a piece of paper (kvitle) which they handed to the Rebbe in an envelope with some money. I saw women crying and begging the Rebbe to ask God for help. After reading the "kvitle" the Rebbe silently prayed in a corner, then he reassured the couple, that with the help of God all their troubles will be over. After having kissed the Rebbe's hand, they left relieved with hope.

When I started to go to heder (Jewish school), the melamed (teacher) promised the children, if they will learn well, God will reward them with sweets. ...Since I was only five (the youngest in the class), the assistant teacher took me up to the attic, to help him drop candy through the spaces between the wooden planks. To the amazement of the children lots of candy rained from the ceiling on the table in front of them. I was happy to do this and kept silent.

I first experienced anti-semitism when I was about five and half. Walking home with my new violin from a lesson, I was accosted by a big boy, who grabbed my violin and threw it to the ground, calling me a dirty, stinking Jew. The case broke, but luckily the small violin (that was custom made for me because I was so small) didn't brake. I went home crying to my mother, "Was I really dirty and stinking?" A few months later my mother sent me to the Wiesel grocery store at the corner to buy some flour for bread. On the way home a boy that I never saw before, knocked the flour out of my hand, that spilled all over the sidewalk, calling me a dirty Jew.

Around Christmas time I was always afraid to walk alone especially at night. Boys dressed like devils with horns and bells on their shoes, used to roam the streets and beat up Jews with their long whips. You couldn't tell who they were, as they were masked. I never understood why children were taught to hate Jews – or anybody at all. Children do not learn hate on their own, but are usually be taught by others. In our home, we were never taught to hate anybody. Luckily there was no prejudice in the schools.

In my childhood, Saturdays bring me my fondest memories. On Friday nights we usually had Shabbat dinner at home. Saturdays after morning services, the Adlers and my grandmother's family, the Szmuks (about thirty of us with the children) had a seven course lunch in the restaurant's dining room. We sang Kosover hassidic melodies and listened to the happenings of that week. Saturday evenings we spent at my mother's parents, the Perls. At dinner (about 28-30 of us) we sang Wisznitser hassidic tunes, which I enjoyed the most.

My mother had seven sisters and four brothers. One of her sisters, Pessy, was a talented artist, who designed and made beautiful embroidery. My father had three brothers and three sisters. His youngest brother, Tzali, was a very talented musician. He was self taught on violin, flute and trumpet. One summer he got a job playing with his jazz band at the Black Sea resort of Constanza. In the middle of the season his mother (my grand mother) went there and brought him home, because they didn't want him to work on the Sabbath. My dear uncle Tzali preferred to play music than tending bar in the tavern. Sometimes he sat in to play with the gypsy band.

Music was part of our everyday life. Ever since I can remember, I heard music on records or on the radio; gypsy, jazz, classical and opera. I started to study the violin at the age of five and half with a Hungarian gypsy, Istvan Filtner. He was a "primas", the leader of a gypsy band. After he got a job with his band at the royal palace, I quit studying the violin. Soon after at the age of seven, my uncle Tzali started to teach me the flute. Three years later I played in the high school orchestra. The conductor was Dumitru Stan, our music teacher. He was very strict. Once while singing in the choir, he struck my palm for looking in the music instead of his conducting. Mr. Stan gave me the basic knowledge of music, that served me throughout my musical career.

At the age of twelve I became principal flutist of the civic symphony, the "Astra", also conducted by Mr. Stan. Several of my friends also played in that orchestra. Only one of them, Tibor Kertesz, who played principal cello, survived the holocaust. After a long career in major symphony orchestras in Europe and Buenos Aires, he settled in Las Vegas, where we played many chamber music concerts together.

Two years later Mr. Stan needed a clarinetist in the Astra orchestra. He asked my uncle Tzali, who played principal trumpet, to talk me into studying the clarinet. Tzali, knowing how much I liked jazz (especially on the clarinet) as I listened to Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw on the radio, told me that if I wanted to be a jazz musician, I would have to play the clarinet. (In those days the flute was not used in jazz.) That persuaded me to start studying the clarinet while still playing the flute in both orchestras. A year later I played the clarinet in the school orchestra.

I must have been fourteen when the Rebbe of Borsha invited me to play for him and his guests the night after Yom Kippur. I played some Romanian and hassidic music that I learned from my grand fathers on the flute. This Rabbi lived across from the Wiesel house and grocery store. We used to live around the corner from their house on the same street where I also went to Zaide's heder (Jewish school). One winter day (it must have been in 1935 or '36). Mrs. Wiesel asked me to take her seven year old son, Eliezer, to heder with me, as he was too young to walk alone in the in knee deep snow in the dark at six o'clock in the morning. I was happy to do it, even though it meant to go out of my way. I never enjoyed Jewish school and wasn't a very good student like Elie, but I was forced to go there for ten years to study (Talmud) ancient laws, commentaries, and philosophic logic. This was all boring to me. Now I'm not sorry I studied, but then I preferred drawing or playing music. I did enjoy the Zionist meetings on Saturday afternoons, where we learned Jewish history and sang Hebrew melodies.

When I was three years old, I remember crying bitterly about something. My father, wanting to cheer me up, he drew a funny clown's face for me. When I saw it, I burst out in laughter. Ever since, I have liked to draw funny faces. When I was about seven, my father brought home a booklet of caricatures of Hungarian poets and writers by Henry Major. I copied all of them. As a young teenager I used to sketch the guests in my grandfather's restaurant and tavern.

In school I wasn't very good at subjects that didn't interest me, like math or science, but I did well in literature, languages, geography, gymnastics and of course music and art. Instead of learning the history lessons (which bored me), I drew portraits of the heroes of that lesson from the history book. The teacher must have been impressed with my drawings because I passed.

Before World War I, my father studied medicine in Budapest. When he passed out at the sight of a cadaver dissection, his mother used this as an excuse to bring him home. My grandparents didn't want him to be a doctor who has to work on the Sabbath anyway. So my father became an insurance agent and an accountant. He shared an office with another insurance man, Mr. Herman (Hertzel) Apsan, who was also a Yiddish writer and a great story teller. Among his talented children he had two sons, both fine caricaturists. Micki the older, was a dentist in Rome, where he also worked as a caricaturist for a newspaper. Moishi (six years older than I) was an illustrator in Bucharest. Father used to bring home caricatures of celebrities done by the Apsan brothers. I copied them all.

In 1939 my mother had a brother in Belgium, who was in the diamond business. As I wanted to continue my studies in better schools, my uncle registered me in a high school in Brussels, where I also intended to study music and art. I had my suitcase packed and my passport and visa ready to leave for Belgium on September first when World War II broke out. The borders were shut and my trip to Belgium was cancelled.

My mind was made up to seriously study music and art, so I decided to go to Bucharest. I knew that at the age of fifteen and half my parents wouldn't let me go there alone. So, unknown to my father, I asked Mr. Apsan for Moishi's address in Bucharest. I told my parents that I wanted to look for schools in Satu Mare, a bigger town 70 kilometers from Sighet. I only had enough money to go that far by train. Besides, I wouldn't have accepted any money from my father. I could make it on my own.

Once in Satu Mare, I sketched guests in a restaurant for two days, charging for my work for the very first time. I made enough money there to take the train to Cluj, the capital of Transylvania. In that big city I sketched in a night club for a week, which enabled me to take the train to Bucharest.

BUCAREST

It was a dark winter night and snowing, when I arrived in Bucharest. At the station, I found out that Moishi's address was at the outskirts of that metropolitan city. After taking the tram to the end of the line, I had to walk in the snow with my suitcase and instruments for several kilometers until I reached Moishi's apartment. It must have been way past midnight when I knocked at the door. The landlady answered. Moishi wasn't home, but thinking that I was his

brother whom Moishi was expecting, she let me in and suggested that I should go to sleep in his double bed. Being very tired, I promptly went to sleep.

In the morning while sleeping facing the wall, I heard Moishi asking how is mother and father were. I answered half asleep, that they were fine, but when he asked about Dori, his only sister, I realized that he thought that he was talking to his younger brother, Yosi (also my age), whom he had been expecting. When I turned around to face him, we both burst out laughing. I told him why I came to Bucarest. And Moishi, whom I considered my mentor, took three days off his work to show me around. I wired home to let my family know where I was, and asked them send me the rest of my clothes.

He registered me in the same private art school where he used to study. The teacher was a well known lady painter. He also took me to the music conservatory, where I wanted to study flute and clarinet. I went to see professor Metani, the principal clarinetist of the Bucarest Philharmonic. After auditioning I was accepted as his student. When I asked Mr. Metani to schedule my lessons so that I could take flute classes too, the professor said that I would have to choose between one of the instruments, as the embouchures are different. Besides, I would have to concentrate practicing on one instrument only. Since I wanted to be a jazz musician, I chose the clarinet and didn't go to see the flute teacher. As it turned out, I became so involved in the classical music which I love, that I never became a jazz musician, but only an admirer.

Moishi also showed me the nightclub district where I could sketch for a living. Although he would never work in those places, I wasn't bashful at all. (I grew up in a tavern). My biggest boosters were prostitutes, who asked their clients to buy them a sketch, so that I could make a living. I wasn't sixteen yet.

On weekends I used to sketch at ballroom dances. One such night, with the permission of the owner, I earned some good money with my caricatures. Before going home, a photographer who also worked at this club, pulled me into a back room and demanded all the money I made that night. I refused, of course. To impress me, he said that he works for the king's royal photographer, then he threatened me by showing me a photo of himself flexing his muscles. That didn't scare me and I still refused to give him my money. The "muscle man" then punched me in the face, so I kicked him in the shin and ran. The next day I went to the royal photographer's studio and complained to the owner about his employee's behavior at the ballroom. That was the last day the "strong man" worked for the Royal Photographer.

On another occasion, Moishi and I went to sketch at a ballroom with the permission of the host. I did the drawings and Moishi did the coloring at a corner table. We both signed the sketches.

After a couple of hours, the manager of the ballroom (not the host) wanted our money. Since we didn't want to comply, he made us leave. I didn't want to give in, so while Moishi waited across the street in a bar, I sneaked back through an open window, and continued to sketch people to make more money. At the end of the evening we shared all the earnings. From then on Moishi called me "an artist of life" ("elet muvesz" in Hungarian, as we spoke).

I was sixteen when I had to draw my first nude girl. Our art teacher used to hire Gypsy girls to pose for us. Once she couldn't find a model, so one of the girl students offered to pose. I was embarrassed, but not her.

Every month my mother used to send cookies that she had baked for me and I used to send home money I had earned to help out the family. At the end of school year when I returned home on vacation, my father handed me an envelope with all the money I sent through the year. He said that they didn't need it, but he saved it for me, knowing that I would only spend it. (This remains true to this day. Luckily, my dear wife, Muriel, now takes care of the money.) One day I was very hungry when I passed a restaurant. In the window I saw a couple of tantalizing pork chops. I had been raised on kosher food and of course never ate pork. I wanted to see what would happen to me if I did eat it. Would I get sick or maybe even die? I took my chances and ordered the pork chops. I enjoyed them, but nothing happened to me. Still I never ate pork anymore except in deportation. I suppose old family habits never die.

This was the first time away from home for any length of time. At the age of sixteen I was so homesick, that when I saw the sign "Steaua Romaniei" on top of a huge building, I had to go in, for that was the insurance company my father worked for. I asked to see the president, who received me graciously. I told him that my father worked for his company and that I used to drive the bike to cash in the premiums. When he found out what I was doing in Bucarest, the president asked me to sketch him and his assistant. I did and he insisted upon paying me. But I refused. I was happy to hear that he knew who my father was.

HUNGARY

In the summer of 1940 while I was on vacation in Sighet, Hungary occupied Transilvania without any bloodshed. One day the Romanians walked out and the next day the Hungarians took over. I enrolled in high school. (I had missed a year while in Bucarest). The school had the same teachers as before, except in literature. The only real change was in language – teaching in Hungarian instead of Romanian. Everybody was bilingual or trilingual in Transilvania.

In 1940, when I was still in Bucarest, two Jewish men from Poland came to my grandfathers restaurant. They said that the Germans had forced all the Jews into ghettos, from where they were being deported to concentration camps. There were also mass murders with the help of Poles. Since we in Sighet still lived in relative peace, nobody believed them. As the Jewish fugitives from Poland were in danger of being discovered by the police, my grandparents hid them in one of the guest rooms. Later in 1941, two other Jews arrived from Czechoslovakia. They told my grandfather of similar horror stories happening in their country. They were both members of the Prague Philharmonic. One was the concertmaster, the other was a French horn player. My grandparents hid them in the other guest room. Food was served in their rooms as we all learned to remain secretive. All four fugitives were our guests for several years. The concertmaster helped me with my practicing. (He wrote down all the scales and harmonies, which helped me for years to come.)

When I came home from Bucarest on vacation, I showed my grandfather, Pinkas Adler, the drawings I did in art school. Among them were many nudes of beautiful girls. When he saw the back of a nude, he turned over the sheet to see the front. I loved my Zaide Pinkas although he slapped my face once (the only

time) when I was about eight years old. Across the street from the tavern was a Russian Orthodox church. A boy my age, with whom I used to play, took me up to the steeple of the church, (the bell tower) to show me the bells. When I looked out the window, I saw my grandfather (who looked very small from above) standing at the door in front of his tavern. I was so happy to be so high, that I yelled down to him, "Zaide, Zaide!" He heard me and looked all over, but didn't see me. When I yelled to him to look up, he saw me in the bell tower window and motioned to me to come right down. Downstairs I faced him with a proud and happy smile for getting up so high. To my surprise I got a slap in my face for entering a church. Later in my travels in France, Italy and Spain, I visited many churches to admire the works of art. To me, the churches of Europe have always spoken more of art than of religion.

In the tavern we had a Hungarian waitress who was like part of the family. When she got married, my grandparents gave them a big wedding party. Since the tavern had to be open every day, she and her husband managed the tavern on Saturdays. When the Hungarian Nazis got into power, someone told the police that my grandparents were hiding alien Jews in the back rooms. Our guests were deported to extermination camps. My grandparents were arrested for several weeks and were constantly beaten. While under arrest, my grandfather was hit over his head with an iron rod, resulting in a brain hemorrhage. Since then he became paralyzed and lived like a vegetable.

When I came home from Budapest on vacation (my last during 3 years of school), my Zaide didn't know me, and cried like a baby without tears. It made me feel terrible to know that he was beaten – his only crime was being good natured and protective of others. Later my sister told me, that he was deported with the whole family from the ghetto to Auschwitz, and went to the gas chambers with most of them.

BUDAPEST

Before the 1941-42 school year started, I went to Budapest to continue my studies. I enrolled in the Jewish high school, and at the National Conservatory of Music. My clarinet teacher was Gyula Vaci, my chamber music teacher was Laszlo Lajtha, and also took piano as a minor. Theory and choral singing was a must. Three times a week I took night classes in a private art school. My art teacher was the well known painter Aurel Bernat. When not in art classes, I went to concerts or opera. Often I had to sneak in, as I was broke. (It helped to be able to sketch the ticket guard at the door). Sometimes I even brought friends along. Since I had no time to sketch for a living, my father sent me a monthly allowance.

I stayed in a small apartment with a schoolmate, Dezso Grauman and his mother. My friend was a super intellectual, who used to write philosophical articles in the paper under his nickname DODI. His articles were answered by professors, and even by the conductor of the Philharmonic. The last time I heard from him was in 1947, when he was studying atomic sciences. The level of education in the Jewish high school was extremely high and behavior was very strict. Besides Latin, French and German (which I also had taken in junior high), I had to learn modern Hebrew and English. There was a large synagogue in the

school, where we were required to pray every morning before classes with tallit and tefilin – the prayer shawl. I also sang in the rabbi's choir.

Just before the school year was over, the Hungarian government requisitioned the Jewish high school for girls. We had to share our classes with the girls, which meant that every other week we had to go to school in the afternoons. Since that schedule wouldn't allow me to attend classes at the Conservatory, I had to find another high school for the next year.

At that time there was a Nazi law called "Numerus Clausus, which meant that only six percent of Jews were admitted in a class, but I was lucky to get into the public Kolcsey high school. I only had to pass an exam for two years of Italian. They recommended a tutor, but I declined. Since the Romanian language is so close to the Italian, two weeks later I passed the exam and became one of the best students in Italian. Our teacher was Mr. Boros, who was a friend of his namesake, Elemer Boros, a cousin of my mother. Elemer Boros was a well known playwright. Dodi and I used to visit him often, and he invited us to see his plays. His brother Dezso Pogany, (who also changed his name from Perl), was the leader of a jazz band. I didn't meet him, but I heard his band on the radio. It was old-fashioned jazz, but I liked it. The Rabbi who taught modern Hebrew and religion was later murdered at the Danube. He was a good man. I used to sing in his synagogue choir too.

My best friend at the Kolcsey was John Lustig (he later changed his name to Macsai). John was the best student in the class, and a very talented artist. We exhibited our paintings at the same art shows. Johnny later became one of the best architects in America while teaching at University of Illinois at Chicago for 26 years. Now as he is retired, he devotes himself to painting. We share a "good deed" to one of our teachers and to the whole class. With all the air raids and bombings during the graduation exams, we didn't have much time to study. We decided to make it easy on the class for the history exam. I collected from each student the price of one egg, which I bought on the black market. Johnny and I took the basket of fifty eggs to the history teacher's home as gift from the class. As a thank you, the teacher gave us a list – each student's test. With these, we all passed the exam.

In 1943 I took a class in conducting from Hans Swarovsky of Vienna. We had at our disposal the "Szekesfovarosi" (Metropolitan) symphony orchestra. Later I played second clarinet in the O.M.I.K.E. symphony and opera orchestra under Vilmos Komor and assistant conductor, Laszlo Somogyi. This orchestra was comprised of Jewish musicians fired from other orchestras in Hungary. (Every concert and opera given by the O.M.I.K.E. symphony was performed twice at the Goldmark Hall where they had only 500 seats.) In early 1944 this orchestra was disbanded. Most of the members were deported to forced labor or concentration camps.

Nazi Germany invaded Hungary and took over the government on March 1944. Under Nazi rule, we Jews were required by law to wear yellow stars of David. Once the new Nazi occupation was in place I didn't get any more mail from my parents. The last thing I got from home was a package; a white shirt of Egyptian cotton, that my mother had made for my graduation. Since we didn't have a graduation ceremony (because of the air raids), I never had the chance to wear it for my high school graduation, but I took it with me to the forced labor camp. Later this shirt saved my life.

I didn't know what had happened to my family. Seven months later I learned from my sister, that the Jews in Sziget had been squeezed into a ghetto, and we then being deported to Auschwitz.

In Budapest, there initially was no ghetto, but Jewish houses and properties were marked with Jewish stars. They were expropriated as soon as the Jews were deported or killed at the Danube. Later they did squeeze them into a ghetto in the eight district, that included the great Dohany synagogue. The Hungarian Nazis picked up Jews on the streets or from homes and drove them in trucks to the Danube, where they were shot and thrown into the river. They murdered in this way, two thousand innocent people and children in every day.

I had a friend at the Conservatory, Zsuzsi, a piano student who said that she was catholic. When I didn't see her anymore, I called her house. Her mother told me crying that she was taken to the Danube. Zsuzsi was told that she had to wear the star, because her parents were Jewish, regardless of their conversion to Catholicism. Being ashamed that she was forced to wear the Jewish star, she had tried to hide it with her purse and was caught. That cost her life.

I had an aunt in Budapest, Zsenka (my father's sister), who lived with her two children, Shulamit (15) and Moshe (10) in an apartment in my neighborhood. Her husband, Kiva, was in a forced labor camp. To save her daughter, Aunt Zsenka took Shulamit to a convent, where she was christened. When a neighbor saw my aunt with Moshe being hauled off to the Danube, he immediately called the convent. Two nuns drove fast to the Danube and saved their lives just as they were about to be shot. When Uncle Kiva heard from a fellow who had just arrived from Budapest, that he saw Kiva's family being taken to the Danube, Kiva was so devastated, that he didn't want to live anymore and volunteered to be sent to an extermination camp. I heard this story later from my father, who was with Kiva in Dachau. Kiva died of typhoid fever a day before liberation.

In early April of 1944, large posters appeared throughout the city ordering all Jewish men from age eighteen to sixty to present themselves for forced labor. With my Jewish nose I didn't dare to walk the streets. To do so would be risking to be shot at the Danube. I figured that I may have a better chance to live in a slave labor camp, so I presented myself at Jaszbereny .

BOR

From Jaszbereny, we were transported by freight train to Yugoslavia and then to the gold and copper mines of Bor in the province of Serbia. The Germans had occupied the country and had Jewish slave laborers with Italian prisoners (General Badoglio's conquered army) work at the mines and the surrounding area.

We were taken to one of the camps in the mountains, called Bregenz. As soon as we had arrived, we had to surrender all our valuables, including our camping boots, which left me to only light tennis shoes to wear. They checked our luggage and frisked us all over. Nazi guards took my two clarinets and my flute, but they couldn't find my piccolo, as I hid it in my sleeve. Later that piccolo also saved my life. I was also able to save some drawing paper, which came in handy later. The front and back of our clothes were oil painted with yellow

Jewish stars using a seven inch pattern. My stars were on the gabardine jacket that my mother made for me.

At work we were supervised by German Todt engineers. We worked in eight hour shifts to fill up a valley between two mountains, so that trains with ore could cross the mountain. The work was so exhausting, that I used to fall asleep walking as we marched back along the railway tracks. Once a boy walking asleep near the rail tracks, was hit by a train and died instantly. We were so tired marching a few kilometers after eight hours of hard labor.

Inside the camp we were supervised by Hungarian guards. Their chief of them was a terrible sadist, who liked to be called Csaszar (Caesar). He was the most cruel man I ever met. He seemed to enjoy torturing innocent people. So much was his hatred for Jews that he was particularly cruel. The other Hungarian guards were not much better. Once when I wasn't feeling well, the smell of the "soup" made me want to vomit, so I poured it in the urinal. A guard saw it and beat me up badly. Every evening after we returned from work, Caesar picked out twelve boys at random. He had them hang from a long pole by their hands tied behind their back for two hours. Hatred and torture became regular sight.

For breakfast we got something hot, they called coffee. For dinner we had a so called soup, that tasted more like dishwater and a slice of black bread. We also got a cigarette, which I traded for an additional slice of bread. After dinner we sat down to pick lice out of our clothes. For entertainment, however, we were surrounded by many talented people. There was a cantor named Katz, who formed a choir that sounded quite good. Some of us who were classical musicians tried to imitate the sound of instruments in chamber music. We gathered around a miniature score to "perform" Quartets and even Beethoven's Septet. I was lucky to have an instrument in order to play the flute part on the piccolo. A French horn player, who saved his mouthpiece, played the horn part with his lips. Some people were able to distract themselves from our harsh conditions by playing cards or chess. We had a young rabbi whose dissertations were inspirational.

I shared a triple bunk with two talented young men; Peter Bleier, a 19 year old jazz trumpet player, (they took his trumpet) and Joshka (Joseph), an 18 year old sculptor, who was raised by his single mother as a catholic. He was illegitimate and had never known that his father was Jewish. It was only with the Nazi takeover that he learned of his father's heritage. Therefore Joshka had to wear a Jewish star and go to forced labor.

We had to sleep with the lights on, because the bedbugs would crawl over us in the dark. The luckiest was the one who slept on top, because the bottom of the bunks were covered with bedbugs. If someone just moved, bugs would fall all over the person under him. I slept on the bottom bunk.

Soon after we arrived to the Bregenz camp, a few of us talked about escaping. We just had to find someone who lived in the mountains and would lead us to the partisans (Tito's underground army) who for what little money we had been able to hide.

At work we were given a half hour lunch break, but no lunch. One day I took my piccolo to work, and started to play during break time. To my surprise, the German guard (a Todt engineer) enjoyed my music. In fact, from then on he gave us an hour break, so that I could play more for him.

My friends told me, that they found a peasant, who for a thousand Dinars would lead us to the partisans. The plan was to escape during break time, but that left me out, as I had to play the piccolo for the guard. I never heard anymore about the escape.

One evening as we were returning from work, just before entering the camp, we saw nine boys – my friends – being brought back in chains by the German guards. My friends had been double crossed by the peasant, who had taken all their money while promising them freedom. Instead, he had told the German Nazis that for a thousand Dinars he would lead them to the woods, where the escapees would be waiting in vain for the partisans.

What happened to my friends, were the most inhumane atrocities. They were hung by their wrists which were tied behind their back for a whole week in a dark room without food and water. Those who passed out were revived with a bucket of water over their head. A week later, when they were almost dead, we were assembled to watch them as they were forced to dig their own graves with their bare hands. They were then ordered to lay in the graves where they were shot, while the entire camp had to watch. I could have been among them had it not been for my piccolo.

On the other side of the barbed wire fence were the German barracks. When a German officer saw Yoshka making a sculpture from clay he had found, he asked Joshka to make him a bust. The talented young man sculpted a perfect likeness of the officer in the German barrack. When it was finished, they called to show the Lagerfuhrer (chief of the camp) the work of art. When the colonel saw the sculpture, he admired it so much, that he wanted a bust for himself too, and asked who did it. When he was told that it was done by a Jewish boy, he became so enraged, that he knocked the still wet statue to the floor and stomped on it with his boots, screaming that Jewish art and artists must be annihilated.

For punishment Joshka was hung by his hands tied behind for three hours. After that (with his wrists still sore) he was sentenced to work in the Strafflager (punishment camp) down in the mines.

Peter and I didn't want to be separated from Joshka, so we volunteered to go with him to the Strafflager. It was so called because the work shifts in the mines were twelve hours a day one week and twelve hours a night the next week and the work was much harder and very dangerous. They dynamited all the time and rocks were flying all over, injuring people and even killing some. Every time I got hit by a rock, the wound would fester the next day, as my body had no resistance from the lack of proper food.

We worked together with Italian prisoners. They were protected by the Geneva convention, so the injured were treated by the Red Cross. The Italians with whom I used to work, shared their lunch with us, as we had none. My knowledge of Italian came in handy and I made friends with some of them.

One day after work I was standing at the barbed wired fence glancing at a truck full of tomatoes. A young German guard (about my age) stopped in front of me and asked where I was from. I said, "Transilvania," to which he answered with a smile. He was from there too. I knew that he was a Schwab. His ancestors were transplanted from Germany in the 19th century during the Austro-Hungarian regime, to farm the rich soil of Transilvania and Banat. During the war the Schwab boys had to join the German army. Besides German we could converse in Hungarian and Romanian also. When the guard saw me staring at

the tomatoes, he asked me if I want some. I said, "Sure, but I don't want you to get into trouble." He told me not to worry, and went to the truck. After he filled his helmet with tomatoes, he came back and pushed it through the barbed wire fence. I hurried to the barracks and poured the tomatoes on my bunk. I then took a drawing pad and pencil and returned with his helmet. By way of thanking him, I did a quick sketch of him.

While we were eating tomatoes with my friends, I heard my name being called. The Lagerfuhrer wanted to see me. I was scared to death. I remembered the colonel in the Bregenz camp. I told my friends that if I didn't come back, they may have my belongings.

I entered the colonel's office shaking with fear. The chief of the punishment camp was sitting at a desk and without looking up, motioned me to sit down. I didn't dare, so he said politely, "Bitte nehmen Sie Platz" (please have a seat). After I sat down, the colonel asked my name and called me Wolfgang. He said that he saw the sketch I made of the soldier, which had looked just like him. He told me that he had a great admiration for talent. Then he took out his wallet and pulled out a picture of a beautiful woman. Showing it to me, he said, "This is my wife, whom I haven't seen in four years. Could you draw me a large portrait from this photograph?" I agreed to do it happily, if I could only buy some art supplies. Without hesitation he gave me a pass to go into town to buy the supplies I needed, then he asked me how much the sketch would cost. (He was one of the few human beings that could be found in the camps. Not all were monsters.) Since I had no use for money, I asked for some food instead.

When I returned to our barracks, I told of my latest "art commission." My friends couldn't believe it. They gave me money to buy them some food in Bor. But when I got to the front gate, and tried to show my pass, the guard didn't even look at it. Nobody ever got passes out of the camp. Instead of letting me out, the guard gave me an order to carry a large case of dynamite with another boy to a bunker on top of the mountain. We were ordered to climb with the heavy load straight up the mountain in the rain on slippery leaves and not to take the road. By the time we reached the bunker on the summit, it was dark. We finally descended on the regular road, and I never made it to Bor. I returned without art supplies and without groceries.

Luckily I had some drawing paper, though not as large and not the quality I wanted. I started to sketch at the mine. When I told the guard at work for whom I was drawing, he let me off work.

The colonel loved the portrait, and gave me a salami with bread, which I shared with my friends. When the other officers saw the portrait, they asked me to sketch their wives and children too. They all provided with photographs of their families. For a while we weren't hungry.

In the fall of 1944 we heard planes and bombings in the area. The Germans became nervous as the Russians were getting close. They stopped work at the Straßflager in the mines as well as in the mountains. Before they were ready to return to Germany, the Lagerfuhrer let the Italian prisoners go home and he sent the three of us back to the Bregenz camp to join our group the last to be transported. This saved our lives...

Since there was no more work to do for the Germans, Caesar saw to it that we didn't remain idle. Every day we had to go to the houses that had been bombed in the village and for eight hours we had to chop off the walls

undamaged bricks. Once this was done, we then had to carry them up the hill and several kilometers back to the camp – six bricks in each hand. At the gate Caesar inspected each brick. If he found one brick chipped in at a corner or with concrete on it, that person was hung for two hours as usual. This chore was worse than what we did for the Germans.

At one time there were eight thousand Jewish slave laborers at the Bor camps. By September of 1944, there were only 6,500 of us left. They told us that we would be sent back to Hungary in three groups. This was a lie. The first group of 2,500 was from the Straßlager, the second group of 2,500 followed the next day. I went with the third group of 1,500 young men surrounded by two hundred German and Hungarian guards. We were given no food or water, though the guards had plenty. When we were marched past farms or fields, we stole corn, fruit or whatever was edible. On the porch of a deserted farm house we found a barrel full of cheese in water. I took a piece of cheese that was covered with worms. I tried to scrape off the worms, but they were swarming throughout the cheese. I was so hungry that I ate the cheese, worms and all.

While we walked through the mountains for three days, we heard shots from all sides. We, as well as the guards, knew that we were followed by the partisans. The third day one of the partisans stepped out in front of the convoy with his machine gun, and ordered the guards in Hungarian and German to give themselves up, because they were surrounded by an army. (This partisan was the only Jewish boy, who succeeded to escape from Bor.) All two hundred guards dropped their weapons, which our boys picked up immediately. From behind the trees out came fourteen more partisans. The Nazis were bluffed. I didn't see what happened to them after our liberation, but whatever was done to Caesar, he deserved.

Our liberators told us that the two groups before us were massacred in the woods near Csersvenka, just half hour from where we were liberated. The first group of 2,500 boys had to dig a mass grave. Then, in groups of twenty at a time, the men ordered to face the grave. They were shot in the back with machine guns. The same atrocity happened to the second group of 2,500 boys. Such a fate awaited us a half hour later, had we not been liberated.

As the Soviets were closing in from the East and the Americans with the British were bombing Germany and reading to invade from the West, the Germans wanted to fly back to Germany. But before they left Yugoslavia they didn't want to leave any Jews behind alive. We were the lucky ones.

Later in Romania I found out that one of the boys had been pulled out alive from the mass grave. After all the guards left the mass execution, one smart German soldier stayed behind. He yelled into the grave that if anyone was still alive, he should give him a sign of life. The German soldier said that he will pull out anyone who was still alive on the condition that person would save him in turn when the Russians arrive. That boy who had survived did so by jumping into the grave before the bullet hit him. I heard that he did save the German soldier's life.

Our liberators took us to an evacuated village, to join Tito's army of partisans. They were going to fight the Germans to liberate Belgrad. I wasn't ready to go to war unprepared. I had never even held a gun in my hand. I decided to go to Romania instead. A friend from the camp who had been a medical student had been given a medical arm band by the Nazi guards. As

such, he was able to pass through the partisans' lines. He bandaged my knee and helped me limp into the village, thus avoiding any combat. Instead of going to the hospital, we hid in an evacuated house. At midnight after the our boys from our camp went to war with the partisans, we ventured out of the farm house. The village was empty, except for one house where we saw light. We entered and met an old couple, who didn't want to leave for the mountains. The nice people gave us baked beans in lard, that we ate as we were very hungry. We hadn't eaten much for several days though, and the food the elderly couple gave us was so greasy and heavy that we both ate, vomited and went to sleep.

Early morning we walked into the partisans headquarters. We told them that we had been separated from our group and would like to rejoin them. They gave us each a loaf of bread and pointed west; the way to Belgrad. We went east and began the hard climb of the mountain toward Romania. Fortunately, we met a Romanian farmer along the way who gave us a ride over the mountain on an oxen-drawn wagon,

On the other side of the mountain was Yugoslavian province of Banat, populated by rich Romanian farmers. After we descended, we entered the first farmhouse at the foot of the mountain. When I told the farmers in Romanian who we were, the family invited us to stay with them as long as we wished.

I wore my jacket inside out, not to reveal the large yellow stars, but I still wore the Hungarian cap, to protect me from the cold. For two weeks we led the life of farmers. We helped in the field and some days I worked as a shepherd watching the sheep grazing in the mountain. In the span of a just a few days, I had gone from working as a forced laborer in a mine to being a shepherd, relaxing on a mountain while playing my piccolo.

One evening as we returned from the cornfields with a cart full of corn, an army of partisans on horses descended the mountain. They noticed our Hungarian caps, and arrested us, thinking that we were the enemy. When I showed them the yellow stars inside my jacket, we shook hands. They told us we should join them in the war against the Germans to liberate Yugoslavia. Since they were all on horses, they told us to meet them in the next village at the partisans headquarters. Although we were grateful to the partisans for saving our lives and even felt guilty for not joining them in the war, my immediate aim was to find out what happened to my family.

We thanked our hosts for their wonderful hospitality and proceeded toward the village. On the way it got dark, so we entered a farmhouse to ask for directions to the Romanian border. The good people offered us dinner and invited us to spend the night there. In the morning, after breakfast, our host drew a map of the villages leading to Romania for us. We got a ride on a wagon driven by oxen to the next village. When the villagers saw us on the street, they brought out a couple of glasses of Slibovitz (prune brandy made locally), than they invited us for dinner. After dinner I played for them some Romanian music on the piccolo. They asked us to stay over night. In the morning after breakfast, they filled our back packs with bread and cheese and found us a ride to the next village. We had the same kind of reception in the other villages. Without our knowledge, some farmers put food and even some money in our backpacks. Besides playing the piccolo, I sketched some of the farmers and their family. I never met more hospitable people in my life. When we stopped in a bigger town I made some money drawing caricatures in a tavern.

After a week of traveling from village to village in oxen drawn wagons, we finally arrived at the Danube. All the bridges crossing to Romania had been blown up. We spotted an old peasant with a small boat, and asked him to take us across the river. He inquired if we had any money. We said that we hadn't as we had just come from a forced labor camp. He then asked me to give him the shirt I was wearing. It was the one my mother had made for my graduation. I took it off and gave it to him. Then he asked my friend if he had a tooth brush. My friend obliged happily with his toothbrush and we were on the way to freedom. By that time Romania, including Transilvania and Banat, had been liberated by the Soviets.

COMMUNIST ROMANIA

We hopped on a military train going to Timisoara, the capital of the province of Banat. My mother's oldest brother, Isaak, and two of her cousins lived in Timisoara (Temesvar in Hungarian). Luckily they were all there when I arrived. They had made a deal with the Romanians not to be deported, although the Nazis ordered the deportation of the Jews. I spent a month in that big city, during which time I sketched the most well known people in town. I then approached the manager of the opera house and requested the opportunity to exhibit my sketches. He gave me a contract to exhibit my entire collection (144 sketches on twelve panels) in the marble hall of the opera house. In the end, I sold almost every one to back to the people whom I had originally sketched.

While in Timisoara, I met a violinist friend, Gabriel Banat, who had studied in Budapest and was now living there with his parents. In 1940 I had heard Gabi, at the age of sixteen, give a recital in Bucarest with George Enescu at the piano. He introduced me to a fellow violinist, Stefan Romascanu, with whom we later met once again in Paris and Siena. The last time I saw Gabriel Banat, he was playing with the New York Philharmonic.

One day Gabriel, Stefan and I went to a movie. Next to us were a couple of boys who made anti-Semitic remarks in Hungarian. Behind us sat a Russian captain who overheard the insults. He beat the two boys up and threw them out of the theatre. It turned out that the "Russian" was a childhood friend of mine, Paku Schechter, the nephew of the great violinist, Joseph (Joska) Szigeti. His father, Shamu, Szigeti's younger brother, was a wonderful double bass player, who used to play with me in the Astra orchestra. I was born in the same house where they lived. Uncle Shamu (as I called him) used to own a music store around the corner from my grandfather's tavern, where he spent lots of time.

A few years later, in 1953, while I was on tour with the Boston Pops, Szigeti played the Brahms violin concerto with us. When I told him that I was also from Sziget, the maestro asked me if I knew what happened to his family. I told him that they all perished in Auschwitz, except for his nephew Paku, who escaped from a forced labor camp and joined the Russian army.

Not knowing the fate of my own family or where to even begin looking, I decided that it was time for me to continue my studies. The war continued throughout the rest of Europe and it was impossible to get reliable information about the people taken by the Nazis so I went back to Bucarest. I registered at the

Academy of Fine Arts for morning classes and the Academy of Music for classes in the afternoons. My new clarinet teacher was Ungureanu, the new principal clarinetist at the Philharmonic. (My former teacher, Metani, retired.) I also played in the school orchestra, took chamber music and music history classes.

At the Academy of Fine Arts I had a good teacher, who started me on painting after having studied drawing for six years. At night I drew caricatures in night clubs, as I did in 1939 and 1940. When I could afford it, I went to concerts and opera. (In Bucarest, it was impossible to sneak in.) At the odd bad performances I learned how not to play, but from the great performers I learned more than in school. I heard David Oistrach for the first time and Shostakovitch's symphonies were a revelation.

Soon after I arrived in Bucarest I ran into a cousin, Tzali Szmuk, the son of the Senator Mihai Szmuk. I was surprised to see him in shabby clothes as he was an ardent communist during the war. He said that he just came back from the Soviet Union where he spent three years in forced labor. He told me that he wasn't interested in communism any more since he had seen first hand how it works, or rather doesn't work. All he wanted was to continue his studies in engineering. When he was recognized by a communist friend, he was given a full scholarship. After a few years, my cousin Tzali graduated in electrical engineering and geology. He taught in two universities and had all the privileges of a government V.I.P., including an apartment and a car. As a geologist he discovered gold in Transylvania. The communist government made a fortune mining the gold, but didn't raise his salary. Although he made a decent living compared to most people, Tzali couldn't save for a rainy day. After he spent a lifetime of service for the government, they retired him on a small pension and took all his privileges away including the apartment and the car. His daughter Hedda, who immigrated to the United States, had to buy back the apartment and support her parents. My brilliant cousin died a poor man.

After the school year ended, I was offered a full scholarship in both Academies for the next year of 1945/46. They would even give me credit for the years I studied in Budapest, if I could show them proof from each school. There was only one condition; after I graduate, I would have to be in the service of the communist government for the rest of my life. I thanked them, and promised to sign the contract when I returned from Budapest with proof of my three years of credits. The offer of a full scholarship was very tempting, but I couldn't forget what it was like being a slave. I decided to take my chances and pay my own way, but I would be a free man.

Shortly after the war was over, I received a letter from my sister, Seri, who just came home from Auschwitz. I immediately went to see her in Timisoara. She told me what happened to our family. In Sziget they were kept in a ghetto for a few weeks. From there they were squeezed into a cattle car with about a hundred people, including children and the sick. After a few miserable days of travel, during which some of the people died, they arrived in Auschwitz. Upon disembarking the train, the old and sick people, along with mothers with children were directed to go to the left. They were told, that they would be going to a shower. Our mother having a premonition, grabbed her younger sister Tabi's two children and went with them to the left. Instead of the showers they went to the gas chambers. From there the bodies were taken to the crematories. Our mother tried to save her sister's life, but Tabi was later killed anyway. Seri

didn't know what happened to our father. This was the first time I heard what happened to our family.

I missed my mother. She was generous to a fault. I remember when a girl from a village used to stop by to sell sour cream. Mother saw that the sour cream was too watery, but she paid for it anyway to help her out. Later she gave it to the cat. My mother never told me what career I should choose, although she would have preferred something more practical than the arts, but she said, "Whatever you choose to do, try to be the best."

Very few of our big family returned from the hell that came to be known as the Holocaust. A few of my cousins were liberated, but none of them moved back to Sighet. Two cousins, Hedi Fried (Szmuk) and Dora Sorell. (Apsan, married to cousin Zoltan Szmuk) wrote books about their experiences in concentration camps. My sister Serena, (Shoshana by her Hebrew name) immigrated to Palestine in 1945 on an illegal ship that was rerouted to Cyprus by the British. After three months of detention, she finally made it to the land that would soon become Israel.

In September of 1945 I went to Budapest. I was happy to find out, that Aunt Zsenka were safe and sound along with her two children. Although I didn't intend to return to Bucarest with the credits from the schools, I paid a visit to my former art teacher Aurel Bernat, who, by that time, was dean of the Academy of Fine Arts. He gave me a nice letter of recommendation, which helped me later to get a scholarship in Brussels. I also paid a visit to maestro Komor, who, by that time, was artistic director of the Budapest Opera House.

Though I had only planned to stay in Budapest for a few days, I had the good fortune to be walking down the street where I was staying with friends, when I ran into an American soldier, who looked very familiar. It was my own father dressed in an American army uniform! I thought I saw a ghost! I had given him up for dead five months after the war was over. He thought that I was dead too, when he heard of the massacre of the boys from Bor. Aunt Zsenka, his sister, told him that I was alive and staying with friends somewhere in the same neighborhood. Not knowing my address, my father walked all over the neighborhood until he found me on the street.

I asked him what took him so long to come home? He said that he was in Dachau dying of Typhoid fever, when the Americans came in to liberate them. His brother-in-law, Kiva, died of typhoid fever the day before. An American doctor who had set up a hospital took personal care of my father and sent him to a sanatorium to recuperate. After five months there, my father boarded a train, that took survivors home. The last stop was Sighet. That train stopped in Budapest for only 24 hours. In Dachau Kiva told father, that he didn't want to live, because the Nazis killed his family at the Danube. Since he had a free day in Budapest, father went to see what happened to his sister's apartment. To his astonishment, Zsenka and both children were there alive and well.

The next day father talked me into going with him on the survivors train to Sighet. When we arrived there, we didn't find anyone from our family. What used to be our home town, looked more like a ghost town. Our house had been ransacked, so we couldn't stay there. We found out that Russian soldiers used to stay in our house. They destroyed everything. Even the leather covers of the sofa and lounge chairs were stripped. We had to stay with friends.

Father started to work for the American Joint Distribution Committee, a charitable organization that helped many of the people who had lost homes and families during the war. After a couple of weeks I couldn't stay in Sighet any longer. It was too depressing. I hated to leave my father after all we went through. I remembered how much I missed him when I was away from home. I knew that he loved me too, although he never mentioned it, but showed with his deeds. He was an observant Jew, but not a fanatic. He was kind and never raised his voice. When I asked him why I had to follow outdated Jewish laws that didn't make any sense to me, his answer was, "Because I follow them, your grandfathers followed them and your great grandfathers did it. This is our tradition." He told me once, "You are a good boy, but you have one weakness – religion." He meant that I don't keep all the religious laws, except the Ten Commandments. Years later when I became health conscious, some of those religious health rules did make sense. I may not be a strictly observant Jew, but I am a very conscious one and a fervent Zionist.

I wanted to continue my studies, so I set out to go to Belgium where I originally planned to go before the war broke out. I didn't know if my uncle, Nandor was still alive, but I decided to go anyway. The two brothers with whom I grew up, Nathan and Itsu (Emeric) Fuchs, also had an uncle in Belgium. We decided that Nate and I should leave first and when we found our uncles, Itsu would join us in Belgium.

We left Sighet without passports and visas for Satu Mare (70 km away). We were unable to travel by train any further as we had very little money. Nathan had seven American dollars sewn into his belt, and I had two dollars sewn in my belt for an emergency. As we walked through the streets in Satu Mare we were approached by a Russian captain who asked us in Yiddish if we knew where he could buy a truck full of salt. We didn't know either but we asked around and found a place where the Russian could buy all the salt he needed. (There was a salt mine not far in Baia Mare.) He was going to sell it on the black market in Budapest where salt was like gold. The Russian captain wanted to pay us for the favor, but we asked him to give us a ride to Budapest instead.

Our new friend gave us Russian uniforms to wear and as we sat on top of the sacks of salt on his truck. We were supposed to be guarding the salt. Fortunately we didn't have to speak Russian. When we got to the border the captain told the customs officer that the salt had to be delivered to the Soviet headquarters in Budapest.

BUDAPEST

When we arrived in Budapest, our Russian friend gave us each a sac of salt, which we sold on the black market. With the Russian uniforms we had no trouble crossing to Czechoslovakia. From Bratislava we took a train to Prague, which had to pass from the Russian zone to the American zone. Since we had no passports, I figured that the Americans would let us through if I play my clarinet. As soon as the American M.P. (military police) entered our compartment, I started to play American music. The M.P. took me alone off the train, but Nate volunteered to follow me. He took us to the American headquarters at the station

and yelled to his friends, "Guess who I found? Somebody who can play jazz!" They asked me to play something. I was no jazz musician, but I knew a few popular tunes that I used to hear in the clubs where I sketched. Nevertheless it pleased the Americans who were probably homesick. After I finished, they gave us some food and cigarettes. At that time you could buy a dinner for a couple of American cigarettes and we did. After dinner we took the next train to Prague.

PRAGUE

In Prague, we checked into a hotel then went sightseeing. We visited one of the oldest synagogues in Europe and a couple of museums. As we needed money, I went to sketch in the evening in restaurants and bars. Nate stayed in the hotel listening to the radio. I never made so much money so easily as that night. When I returned to the hotel with my pockets full of Money, Nate had a fit. He heard on the radio that the money was devalued that day. All the money I was given that night was old, void bills. Since I never saw Czechoslovak bills (old or new), and not knowing of the devaluation, I thought the people in Prague were so wonderful.

The next day, we were hungry, but had no money. I said to Nate, "Let's go to an expensive restaurant." He thought that I was crazy, but I reassured him to leave it to me. I ordered the finest dishes we liked. Nate still thought I was insane. After we finished eating, I did a caricature on the back of the menu of a gentleman at the next table. When our waiter brought the check, I asked him to give the sketch to that gentleman with our compliments. When he saw his own caricature, the gentleman came over smiling to thank me and offered to pay for it. I refused to accept money, as this was my pleasure. He insisted to pay at least for our dinner and picked up the check.

That evening, we sneaked into a concert of the Prague Philharmonic and heard Yehudi Menuhin for the first time, live. After the concert, I drew his caricature and gave it to him.

GERMANY

In order to continue our trip westward, we had to hitchhike to the German border. There we met a fellow Zionist who helped survivors go to Palestine. We joined his group of about fifteen people to cross the border at night. We walked in the snow through a forest and had to be very quiet not to be heard by the border guards. When dogs started to bark, a baby next to me cried so loud that we were in danger of being caught. Luckily I was able to stop the baby from crying, so the mother asked me to carry the baby. I was carrying my backpack and a triple clarinet case with my paint box in one hand and a heavy valise full of clarinet music in my other hand. I had to drop the valise in the snow in order to carry the baby. We were lucky to cross the border unnoticed by the border guards. From there we hitched a ride to Munich.

In Munich we slept in the public place for survivors of the war – mostly Germans. The next day as we walked on the street, to our surprise we bumped into Nate's younger brother, Itzu. Nate asked him why he didn't wait until he

called Itzu from Belgium. His brother replied that he was bored and couldn't wait any longer, so he took off on his own. From then on we all continued to Belgium together.

We wandered into a DP camp (Displaced Persons) in Furth, near Nuremberg. There we stayed in a small bungalow and received food from the Americans. We tried to find out from the Belgian Consulate in Nuremberg if our uncles were still alive, since most of the Jews in Belgium were deported. As we didn't know their addresses, they couldn't help us.

One night there was a nine o'clock curfew. Our next door neighbors asked me to come over and play music for them. I took my flute and, with Itzu, we walked a few steps next door. Suddenly, two German policemen arrested us. We thought the DP were strictly under American supervision, but I guess we were wrong. They drove us to a jail in Fürth, where we were locked in a dirty cell with no light. We couldn't sleep all night, not so much because of discomforts, but being persecuted by Germans again. Itzu went through hell in Auschwitz as a Sonder-commando (he had to pick up bodies, pile them on a cart and take them to the crematorium). In the morning, the police let us go free.

The best part of the DP camp was that the Americans sent us for two weeks to a mountain resort in Hilpolstein. The surroundings were beautiful and the food was excellent. There I did some painting of the scenery. They sent me for a physical check-up. An old doctor took an X-ray of my chest and found that one of my lungs was shorter than the other. It was calcified because I had dry pleurisy when I was fourteen. (I remember that my mother hid my clarinet in the attic of our neighbors' house across the street so I wouldn't practice. I went on a hunger strike until I got my clarinet back.) When I told the old doctor that I play the clarinet, he said that I could die if I play any wind instrument. I was devastated.

After our stay in Hilpolstein we proceeded Northwest to Aachen at the Belgium border. There we met two Jewish soldiers who were in the Polish army of Britain. They were importing chocolate from Belgium and exporting something from Germany. We told them that we want to go to Belgium, but have no passports. Our new friends gave Itzu and I each two military berets. (Nathan decided to wait until we find our uncles. Before taking a military train to Antwerp, they instructed us, that when a British M.P. enters our compartment, we should put on the green Polish berets, and when the Polish PM would come, we should wear the black British berets. This way we could pretend not to speak their language. As such, we arrived in Antwerp without any trouble.

BELGIUM

It was in the middle of the night in November of 1945 that, after inquiring, Itzu found out his uncle's address. We woke up his family. They thought that their whole family from Sighet perished. It so happened that Itzu's uncle knew my uncle Nandor and gave me his address in Brussels.

The next day I went to Brussels, where I found my uncle with his wife Pesla and their six year old daughter, Helen. Pesla, who had escaped from Poland, was a beautiful and good natured woman. She was as happy to see me as my uncle was. They thought that I was the only relative to who survived

(except for a brother and sister of Nador, who had immigrated to Palestine in 1936). They heard that I was somewhere in a DP camp in Germany, so my uncle hired a man to look for me. That man went to every DP camp in Germany, but couldn't find me. (I must have been in the Hilpolstein resort.) I told my uncle about his brother Isaac and his cousins in Timisoara, my father who was liberated in Dachau and my sister who had also immigrated to Palestine.

When the Germans occupied Belgium in 1940 and deported all the Jews to concentration camps, my uncle and aunt Pesla hid with a gentile family. Since they couldn't take their two year old Helen with them, they hid her with another gentile family. Four years later, when the war was over, they went to fetch their daughter, but the family wouldn't give her up. Uncle Nador had to give them all the money he had left to regain their child.

Uncle Nador bought me new clothes and sent me to a doctor and a dentist for check-ups. When I told the doctor that a German doctor warned me not to play the clarinet because one lung had been shorter, he recommended that I continue to play a wind instrument to strengthen my lungs. Even if I did not want to play professionally, the playing would only help my condition. To make sure, I went to another doctor for a second opinion. That doctor made the same recommendation. The next day I went to the Royal Conservatory and auditioned.

I got a scholarship and registered for the clarinet, theory, chamber music and composition. Orchestra playing was required. My clarinet teacher was Pierre De Leye,, the principal clarinet of the National Symphony Orchestra. I studied theory with Marcel Poot and composition with Leon Stekke. (I don't remember the names of my chamber music teacher or the orchestra conductor.)

I also registered in the Academy of Fine Arts. My teacher was Mr. Devoss, a well known painter. He let us develop our own style as long as it was not an abstraction. We had some very talented students in the class, of which some became well known. We had to paint a life size nude in two weeks. Sometimes I painted two nudes (from different angles) in two weeks.

The French I studied in school came in handy, but it wasn't good enough. So, every day I read something in the paper that interested me and looked up thirty words I didn't know in the dictionary. I wrote them down and memorized them. After six months my French was fluent.

My Uncle Nador rented a room for me near the Academy of Fine Arts. Later, Nate and Itzu moved in upstairs in the same building. We used to eat in a Jewish restaurant, which survivors frequented. I often invited newly arrived survivors who had no place to go. I let them sleep on the sofa until they found a place of their own. A few times I was robbed by my guests, but I never learned. Once I took in a boy who told me that he studied medicine in Budapest, but he had no documents to prove it. I found him a job in a hospital. When I came home to tell him the good news, he disappeared with my best clothes which Uncle Nador had bought me. When Itzu saw him on the street with my winter coat on, he took it off him. The boy did not even put up a fight. I was very relieved as this was my only winter coat.

I enjoyed Brussels with all the artistic activities; concerts, opera, museums and art galleries, not to speak of the beautiful gothic architecture. In order to study the musicians that played, I often had to sneak into the concerts, however, the opera house had a free loge for students of the conservatory. Many of those places I visited with a very talented artist friend, Herman (Harry) Kosak, a

survivor from Vienna. In 1954, he was the best man at my wedding. Later he became professor of Fine Arts at the University of North Carolina.

In the summer of 1946, during vacation, I worked with Itzu as a furrier to make money. Though I had never done this type of work before, I found that I was quite good at it. It takes an artistic eye to assemble a large pattern from many different pelts. It made for a fun summer job. Itzu was a furrier by trade, but later he went into the diamond business with his brother Nathan. In September, I continued my studies in both schools.

Mr. DeLeye changed my conception of tone quality to the brighter sound of the French school. He emphasized artistic phrasing by describing the music in pictures. Technique was important, but only as a tool for better expressing an artistic performance. DeLeye and I became very close. In many ways he became like a father to me. He would sometimes invite me to his house for dinner and I would often help him around the house with chores.

Since I did not have time to sketch for a living, I was often short on money. Many times I rather bought painting materials or clarinet reeds instead of food. As an artist, I've always had my priorities straight.

For the "concours" (a live concert competition at the end of the school year) we had to play a recital of five pieces. Mr. Stekke dedicated his newest composition to Mr. DeLeye. They both decided that I should premiere it at the concours. Not only did I play the Stekke piece with the composer at the piano, but he accompanied me in the other four pieces too. I got second prize.

There was a gentleman in the audience who was so moved by my playing, that he dedicated four poems to me (which he mailed to me at the conservatory). He was the well known poet Kustave dela Croin. I was surprised and honored.

In 1947, my father arrived from Sight. Uncle Nador introduced him in the diamond exchange in Antwerp. This way my father could sell diamonds on commission. Soon after my father remarried to a nice widow, Irene, with a young daughter, Agi. My cousin Eugene Feiger, who survived the Holocaust, also arrived in Brussels and stayed with me. He found a good job and we were got along well together. One day he disappeared without saying goodbye. Later he sent me a letter from Palestine with a picture of himself in a soldier's uniform. He joined the Hagannah to fight for Israel's independence. Years later Eugene settled with his wife Edith in Toronto where he started a company creating woman's fashions. My father later went to work for him in his factory.

When the 1948 summer vacation started, my uncle Nandor bought me a diamond cutting machine and paid a friend who was a diamond cutter to teach me his craft. Being a practical businessman in the diamond trade, my uncle worried that I would have a hard life as an artist or musician. Since diamond cutting is a very profitable profession, my uncle had hoped I could look forward to a life without financial worries. After a two months study my teacher said that I was ready to start working professionally to make money. Just about that time, a crash occurred in the diamond business. I took advantage of that situation. The school year was about to start and I was eager to return to the music Conservatory and the Academy of Fine Arts. My uncle implored me to remain in the diamond business. He would be able to find work for me regardless of the crash. I was very sorry to have disappointed my generous uncle, whom I loved, but I don't regret it. I would never have been happy in the diamond trade. I sold

the diamond cutting machine and went back to both schools. I know I didn't use my head, but my heart was in music and art.

In December of 1948, my chamber music teacher, along with Mr. Stekke and the Dean of the Conservatory, Mr. Joseph Jongen (whose music I also played) came into the clarinet class and conferred in a corner with Mr. DeLeye. After a few minutes they called me over and offered me the position of Principal Clarinet with the Radio Eirean Symphony Orchestra in Dublin. The Dean was asked to recommend his best clarinetist for the job. I was honored, but afraid to take on such a responsibility. Besides, I wanted to finish the class and compete in the next concours. This year I wanted to get first prize! Mr. DeLeye told me that I would learn more on the job in one year than in all the years in school. That made sense to me, so I accepted. Mr. DeLeye took me to the airport. On the way there he gave me advice as to how to play certain solos. At my departure we embraced like father and son. Kept in touch with him until he died.

DUBLIN

In Dublin, I was met at the airport by the manager of the orchestra. He took me to a girls' college boarding house where I was the only man. For the few days I stayed there, I was surrounded by dozens of beautiful girls. I was never so spoiled.

Most of the principals in the orchestra were invited from Italy, France and Belgium. I made friends with some of them as well as with some Irish musicians. After fifty-three years, I still correspond with the French flutist, Christian Lardé, who is an internationally known soloist and the French bassoonist, Gilbert Berg, who after many years with the Radio Eirean Symphony Orchestra retired in France. Gilbert and I stayed with the Italian violinist Lamberto Corbara and his family. The Belgian oboist, Roland Dufrane also ate with us? The four of us, in addition to a Belgian French horn player, formed a woodwind quintet and played several concerts on the radio. I played recitals on the radio with an excellent Irish pianist, Charles Lynch.

The Radio Eirean Symphony Orchestra played two concerts every week. Though Jean Martinon was the main conductor, we had several guest conductors as well. Among them: Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, Jean Fournet and Philip Model. Model was the organist and choirmaster of the synagogue I attended. When he mentioned that he needed a baritone who can read music, I volunteered to sing in the choir as I had sung in the synagogue in Budapest. While in the synagogue I met the president of the congregation, Mr. Robert Briscoe, who was a member of Parliament. He invited me to watch a session in the Parliament and later attend a Sabbath dinner at his house. As I had no citizenship because I had fled the communist government of Romania, Mr. Briscoe arranged to have me issued an Irish passport. As a gesture of gratitude, I presented him with a painting I had produced. Mr. Briscoe later became Lord Mayor of Dublin.

One day, while traveling to work on the bus, I met a young lady, Joan O'Callaghan, who lived nearby us in Ballimun district. She managed an antique store. Since she was dealing in art and antiques, she was interested in the history of art which I had studied for years. I offered to teach her, but with only one year of English in the Jewish high school, my English left a lot to be desired. Every

evening after rehearsals I met with Joan in a coffee house. Each time we met I had wrote out a page of art history. As Joan read the lesson I prepared, she also corrected my mistakes. This went on for a year. By that time Joan had a good knowledge of art history and my English had improved considerably. Living with an Italian family for a year also improved my Italian.

On the nights when we had no concerts, I used to take paint nudes at the Academy of Fine Arts. On my days off I painted scenery in the outskirts of Dublin. One day as I was finishing a landscape with a farmhouse in the background, a car stopped on the road nearby and a gentleman came over to admire my painting. He said that the farmhouse in the background was his and asked if I would mind selling the painting to him. "I'd be happy to!" I said. He asked me to frame it and deliver it to his house. The gentleman paid me more than I had hoped for. And when his neighbors saw the painting they asked me to paint their farmhouses too. I was happy to paint them – not so much for the money as for the beautiful colors of the surrounding flowers.

PARIS

In December of 1949, when my contract with Radio Eirean Symphony Orchestra expired, I decided to go to Paris. Mr. DeLeye had spoken so much of "the French tone," that I wanted to learn that sound first hand from the French. When I later came to America, I found to my dismay, that the French tone that I had so diligently copied was a hindrance. Still, I'm not sorry that I went to Paris.

After auditioning, I had no trouble getting a scholarship at the Conservatoire National de Musique. While there, my clarinet teacher was Ulisse Delécluse and my chamber music teacher was Mr. Oubradus. I also played in the orchestra.

At first I stayed with my mother's cousin, Michael Pearl and his wife and four children for a few weeks. Then I moved to the Cité Universitaire in the house of Monaco. I ate at the cafeteria where the food was quite good (and inexpensive)! This way I didn't have many expenses. From time to time I went to sketch on the terraces of the Champs Elysees to pay my expenses. I even exhibited a number of paintings at the Galerie Zak with the Association of Jewish Artists, Ananaouth. My work was well received and I even sold some. To improve my artwork, I would occasionally sketch and paint nudes in a private studio. Though we see it every day, the human form remains one of the greatest challenges for any artist to capture.

Mr. Delécluse gave me more and more difficult pieces to play. He was a perfectionist for technical virtuosity. I tried to imitate his brilliant tone quality. Once I asked him to explain to me the muscles and throat formation he used to produce a specific sound. He couldn't explain it, although he naturally did it well. Delécluse was more friendly with me than to his other students. When Benny Goodman came to give a concert in Paris, Delécluse invited to the famous Selmer music store, to meet the "King of Swing." The owner, Mr. Selmer took a Polaroid picture of the three of us in front of the store. We were all invited to Benny Goodman's concert.

In the spring of 1950 I heard that Serge Kousevitzki, the retiring conductor of the Boston Symphony, was going to hold auditions for the position of

principal clarinet for the famous Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. For two weeks I practiced eight to ten hours a day until my lips were shot. When the time came to audition, no matter how well I played, my tone squeaked a couple of times. The maestro told my afterward that he liked my playing, but wondered if I always squeak like this. Embarrassed, I showed him the swollen and bloody lower lip I had from too much practicing. He said that he wanted to hear me again in Tel Aviv the following September. But this time, he would send for me without prior notice. That way there wouldn't be a chance of hurting myself by over-practicing. I should make sure that the orchestra manager has my address. Since my sister Shoshana lived in Tel Aviv with her husband Tzvi Felberbaum (also from Sighet), I was happy to go to Israel.

ISRAEL

After staying with my sister for a short time in their small apartment, I rented a room. Shortly after I arrived in Tel Aviv, I was asked to play a recital on Kol Yisrael radio. From this performance, I began to receive private teaching requests from other musicians. Soon I had three clarinet students. One was a member of the Israel Philharmonic. In three months I played two recitals with piano on the radio. My accompanist, Mr. Pelleg, was an excellent sight-reader and a sensitive musician. I also played chamber music on the radio with a wonderful soprano from South Africa. Her vocal coach, a Canadian named Mr. Singer accompanied on the piano. He helped me solve a problem of which none of my clarinet teachers were aware. He had noticed that my tone was not consistent. He analyzed me by asking where my tongue was when I sounded good, then asked me the same when the sound wasn't good. Mr. Singer found that my tongue wasn't always flat, hence I was constraining the air by choking, which impeded the sound quality. For those who do not play the clarinet or any other woodwind instrument, it is important to understand that the instrument requires a great deal of body control from the musician. Not only is finger dexterity and breath control required, but many subtleties such as lip and tongue position can drastically effect a woodwind player's performance. He suggested an exercise to keep my throat open all the time. Singers, he told me, often have the same problem. So it took a voice coach to solve the same problem for a clarinetist. This bit of education alone was worth the trip to Israel. But, of course, I enjoyed the country as a whole, my relatives and playing concerts.

One day without notice, a young man from the Israel Philharmonic picked me up in a car and took me to audition for Maestro Koussevitzki. All the orchestra principals were there. I was given several selections to perform. After a half hour playing accompanied by a pianist (including sight-reading), I was hired as principal clarinetist.

The next few days I rehearsed quintets with the woodwind principal for a concert on the radio. At a symphony rehearsal, one of the violinists brought his eighteen year-old son, Peter Simenauer, to audition for the Maestro during intermission. Mr. Koussevitzky asked me to sit with him and listen to the young man's playing. I said he was talented and, with experience, he would be a fine player. The Maestro had the same opinion. Then Maestro Koussevitzky made me an offer. He asked me if I would want to be his principal clarinetist in his new

orchestra in Washington D.C. or if I would prefer to stay with the Israel Philharmonic. The pay for the position in the United States would be considerably more. He said that I could think about it and let him know the next day. I replied immediately that I would be happy to work for him in America. In that case, he said, he would hire the young man for the position in Israel and meet me in Paris next May with a contract. I agreed to sell my "A" clarinet to the orchestra manager since Peter didn't have one. (A few years later, Leonard Bernstein hired Simenauer for the New York Philharmonic.

PARIS

After three months in Israel I went back to the conservatory in Paris happily knowing that I would have a good job in America. At my first lesson in the clarinet class Mr. Delécluse noticed an improvement in my sound. He asked me for the reason, so I explained how a vocal coach solved my problem of inconsistent tone. A week later I came to class while a student was playing. His tone was inconsistent as mine had been. The teacher asked me to see if he had the same problem. He did and I gave him the same advice as to how he could correct it. The Maestro was big enough to admit in front of his class that even he could learn from a student. I liked him even better for the admission. Delécluse, one of the world's finest clarinetists, was a natural talent. He did everything right by instinct. Frequently, great musicians perform so effortlessly that they may not truly know how they achieved great results. This is the sign of true talent.

Since I had sold my "A" clarinet to the Israel Philharmonic, I now needed one of my own. Delécluse owned a fine "A" clarinet which had been hand-made by Buffet in the 1800s. But, due to a contractual obligation as artistic director with Selmer's instrument company, he was unable to play any clarinet not made by Selmer. When Delécluse learned that I needed an "A" clarinet, he offered to sell me his unused instrument. But there was a catch. Another one of his students had already borrowed it for the Geneva Competition. Delécluse told me that I could have the clarinet if I could get it back from him. As it turned out, this student was reluctant to return the great instrument. I formed a plan. In a rush, I went to the student's home and told him that Delécluse had an emergency and needed the clarinet. When he turned the clarinet over to me I was able to return it to my teacher. Delécluse was so pleased that I was able to get the clarinet back that he let me have it. I felt privileged that my teacher wanted me to perform with such a wonderful instrument. We remained friends and kept in touch until he died. The clarinet still sounds beautiful to this very day.

Maestro Koussevitzky was scheduled to conduct a concert in Paris on May 5, 1951. I was supposed to meet him after the concert and accompany him to America. That very day the Maestro died and Mr. Eugene Ormandy replaced him. I was devastated. I told Mr. Ormandy of my predicament. He was very understanding. He told me that whenever I come to Philadelphia he would like to hear me play. Respectfully, I told him that since my job in Washington D.C. had fallen through, I had decided to go to Toronto, Canada, where my father was living. To help me out, Mr. Ormandy wrote a nice recommendation on my behalf on the back of his business card to his friend Sir Ernest Macmillan. At that time,

Sir Ernest MacMillan was the conductor of the Toronto Symphony and Dean of the Conservatory and Music School of the University of Toronto.

Several years later while playing with the Tulsa Philharmonic, I heard that the Philadelphia Orchestra was going to hold auditions for a principal clarinet. I remembered that Mr. Ormandy wanted to hear me play, so I went to audition for him. When my time came to play, Mr. Ormandy asked me where I studied and where I played. Instead of giving him a straight answer, I made the biggest mistake of my life. I said, "Don't you remember me, Maestro? When we met in Paris, you told me in Hungarian that you studied in the same Conservatory in Budapest as I did." To that Ormandy said with his heavy Hungarian accent, "I don't speak Hungarian and I never met you. NEXT!" That was the end of my "audition." I shall never forgive myself for being so thoughtless. I should have known that Mr. Ormandy would not want to be accused of favoritism.

ITALY

During the summer vacation of 1951, I went to study at the Academia Chigiana in Sienna, Italy. I received a full scholarship from the Count Chigi, a great patron of the arts, to study chamber music and conducting. The classes were held in the Chigi palace, which is itself a museum filled with paintings and sculptures by the greatest Italian masters. In such an atmosphere the music sounded even more beautiful. Count Chigi was the last of the great patrons of art, who every summer for two and one half months, supported a music academy for post-graduate students with twenty of the greatest masters, the Chigi String Quartet, and the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino symphony orchestra. The Count Chigi provided full scholarships for every student who passed an audition. We had a one hundred piece symphony orchestra at our disposal for conducting. I also listened to the master classes of Enescu, Segovia, Agosti, Cassado and other masters. From these men I learned how to color sound and use vibratos and how to create the subtleties of an artistic performance. While listening, I sketched the portraits of the masters.

At that time, the architecture in Siena hadn't changed much since the Middle Ages. With my two friends from the Paris Conservatory, Stefan Romascanu (whom I met in Timisoara) and Reinhard Peters, we spent most evenings listening to concerts and watching the Palio together. This is a Renaissance horse race in which the riders, representing twelve syndicates, are dressed in different colorful costumes. (The costumes were originally designed by Leonardo da Vinci.) The brightly colored flags representing the syndicates are thrown high in the air and adroitly caught by acrobats.

Stefi Romascanu later became concertmaster of the Lausanne Radio Symphony Orchestra. Peters (who was with me in conducting class) performed a violin concerto and piano concerto brilliantly on the same program. He later became conductor of the Berlin Radio and Opera Symphony orchestras.

When the Academy's session ended, I gave Count Chigi twelve portraits of the masters I had sketched as a thank you for the scholarship he gave me. The Count offered me money, which I refused. But after he insisted, I had to accept. With that money I took a tour of Italy.

First I visited Florence. I called a friend, Piero Farulli, the violist of the Nuovo Quartetto Italiano. He drove me around this most beautiful and artistic city, explaining its history. After a great dinner that his wife prepared, we played Mozart's *Kegelstadt* trio (for clarinet, viola and piano) with Mrs. Farulli at the piano.

I visited the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the beautiful Portofino. In Santa Margarita I did caricatures of exhibitors at a wine exhibit for a newspaper. (Italian wines have never tasted as good to me as they did at that show!) I spent a week in Rome sightseeing, but there wasn't enough time to admire everything I wanted to see. I visited Dr. Mikie Apsan, the caricaturist from Seget whose work inspired me as a child. Mikie and his lovely wife received me like a relative. ...Actually, we were... My cousin Zoltan married his sister Dori. After I visited the picturesque island of Capri, I returned to Rome for more sightseeing and then took a train to Venice. I loved Rome! It was one of the most beautiful cities in the world! By chance, I found facing me in the train compartment, a beautiful young lady with blond hair and blue eyes. (I didn't know there were any blondes in Sicily.) he was a school teacher from Palermo, Sicily. She asked me where I was going to stay while in Venice. I didn't know. She told me that she knew the widow of a professor who rented rooms to students. This is where she was planning to stay. If I wanted to, I could accompany her there. I did, and as it so happened, the landlady had a room for me as well.

When I got up in the morning around eight, the landlady told me that my fiancée got up at six o'clock, did my laundry and darned my socks. I told her that the young lady was not my fiancée. In fact, I hardly knew her as we had just met on the train. The landlady said, "If a girl does this for a man in Italy, it means that she wants to marry him!" ...Well, I did like her...But not that much! And I was not particularly ready to get married! I went sightseeing alone and made some money sketching at the café terrace on San Piazza San Marco. I never saw her again.

From Venice I went to Padua to see frescos in a church and then to Milano to see the Last Supper and the beautiful basilica. I listened to a rehearsal at La Scala and met the principal clarinetist. After having lunch together, he invited me to his studio to show me the clarinets he was making. He even gave me one of the crystal mouthpieces he had made. I used it for a long time. From Milano, I returned to Paris.

BACK TO PARIS

Back in Paris I continued my studies at the Conservatory. At the same time, I also played with the newly formed American International Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Jean Dixon. As an African American, he was recognized in Europe as a first rate conductor, before he was ever invited to conduct an American Symphony orchestra.

At the conservatory, I had another violinist friend from Romania; Tiberius Klausner. We went to concerts together, visited art galleries on Sundays and ate in a kosher restaurant together. Later we did the same things together in New York when he studied at Julliard. (Tiberius retired after forty years as concert master with the Kansas City Philharmonic and as head of the string department

at the University of Missouri. He still performs with his string quartet and teaches privately.)

TORONTO

In the fall of 1951, I sailed to Canada on an immigrant ship. After eight days we landed in Halifax. From there I took a train to Montreal. My friends Nathan and Itzu lived there but I didn't have their address. From the station I took a streetcar and told the conductor to let me off midtown. He said that there were five stops downtown and that I my choice. I got off at random. I figured that I would have to ask somebody where the Jewish neighborhood was. As soon as I got off the streetcar, the first man I ran into was my friend Itzu.

After a couple of days I proceeded to Toronto. I was happy to see my father and my cousins. I paid a visit to Sir Ernest MacMillan at the Conservatory and presented him with Ormandy's business card. He was most gracious and offered to play with me a sonata by Brahms. He asked me to let him know when I will become a member of the Musicians' Union.

After I heard the Toronto Symphony, I met it's principal clarinetist, Avrahm (Abe) Galper. I loved his warm tonal quality and we soon became friends. When Abe heard me play for the first time, he said that even with my virtuosity, I would not be able to get a job in America because of my bright French tone. (I had worked so hard to achieve it!) As it turned out, Abe was right. I had to change my tone.

The day I became a member of the Musicians' Union, I gave a recital on CBC radio with a fine pianist, Leo Barkin. After that concert I played several chamber music programs with Mr. Barkin and others. The radio announcer was the actor, Loren Green.

When the summer season started for the lighter program Promenade concerts, Sir Ernest MacMillan invited me to play first clarinet. Most of the conductors were guest artists including Andre Kostelanetz.

Soon after I arrived in Toronto, I read several full pages of reviews and interviews about the great success of Muriel Albert's debut piano recital in New York's Carnegie Hall. I cut out her picture from the newspaper and carried it around in my wallet for three years. That was the girl I wanted to marry. I could have introduced myself to her many times as we lived around the corner from each other, took the same bus and sometimes sat next to each other. I knew that Muriel would someday be my wife. So, I wanted to be properly introduced to her by a mutual friend. That time came when in the spring of 1953 I went to study in Tanglewood, the summer music school of the Boston Symphony. The first day I met my pianist partner in chamber music, Gladys Stein. When Gladys asked me where I was from I told her, Toronto. She exclaimed that I must surely know her best friend, Muriel Albert. I said, "I don't know her yet, but when I meet her, I'm going to marry her!" Gladys laughed and gave me Muriel's telephone number. She told me to give Muriel her best regards. Years later Gladys (who has been teaching piano at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh) continues to spend a few weeks with us every summer.

In Tanglewood, I also played in the orchestra. Our conductors were Bernstein, Copland, Munch and Chavez. My best friend there was Serge Blanc, a

violinist I had known from the Paris Conservatoire and Julliard in New York. Since then he's been concert master of the Paris Opera and professor of violin at the National Conservatory of Paris. We still correspond and see each other and his family occasionally.

Besides playing concerts, I also sketched caricatures of the conductors and professors for the local newspaper, the Pittsfield Eagle in order to make some extra money. The paper was so pleased with my work that they offered a permanent job with them. When I later returned to the United States from Toronto, a customs officer asked why I was entering the country. Proudly, I showed him the letter from the Pittsfield Eagle offering me the position of staff artist. "Oh, no you don't," he said. And back to Canada I was sent. How naive I was. I didn't yet know I needed a Green Card!

As soon as I returned to Toronto, I called Muriel with regards from Gladys. To my delight Muriel invited me to over to her house. She played for me Debussy the way I loved to hear it. The next day we went to a movie and a Hungarian restaurant. We only saw each other a couple of times in Toronto. Then she moved to New York to teach piano at the Henry Street settlement. A couple of days later I went to New York to audition for Arthur Fiedler for the second clarinet position with the Boston Pops. I got the job. By the fourth time Muriel and I met, I proposed to her over dinner in New York. She accepted.

Soon after I went on tour with the Boston Pops for three months. When I came back, we were married in New York City Hall. At the service, Muriel's mother, Rebecca stood as a witness. However, as we left the judge's chambers, she pulled us both aside. "Remember," she said, "You are not REALLY married until you have a proper wedding in the Jewish temple!" Later we did in fact have a big wedding at the Holy Blossom temple in Toronto where our relatives and friends lived. My mother-in-law finally decreed that our marriage was legal!

While in New York, I sketched caricatures of the ambassadors at the United Nations for a book. Every day, I went to the U.N. and sketched men and women representing the nations of the world. In the end, however, I was never able to get the book published. At nights I sketched in a club owned by a former dancer, Mr. Reed. It was frequented by many show business celebrities. Without knowing who he was, I had the honor of sketching my hero Al Hirshfeld and Charles Shultz. An article about the famous people I sketched was written up by Walter Winchell in the New York Times.

When William Steinberg auditioning for the position of principal clarinet in the Pittsburgh Symphony, I competed with about two dozen clarinetists for the position. Mr. Steinberg called me back to play three times, then called me off the stage. In German, he told me that I posed him with a problem. He said that as a musician he liked my playing the best, but he could not use me because my bright French tone wouldn't blend with his German sounding orchestra. He suggested that I should darken my tone and asked that I return next year so that he could hear me again. (I was sorry that Mr. Hamelin of the Orchestre National de Paris died after I had only one lesson with him. He was going to darken my tone.)

In New York I told my predicament to a clarinetist friend, Albert Kaufman. Al took me to his former teacher, Daniel Bonade. Most of his students were principal clarinetists in major symphony orchestras. He is credited with establishing the so called "American" clarinet sound (although Bellison of the

New York Philharmonic had a beautiful dark tone, though not as big). When I auditioned for Bonade, he said that I don't need more technique. For two years he worked with me only on slow pieces for tone quality while cleaning up my staccatos and legatos. It took me many years to digest his teaching until I finally achieved that "American" sound.

ST. LOUIS

I didn't go back to Pittsburgh to play for Mr. Steinberg. Instead I auditioned for Vladimir Golschman in New York. He hired me for the St. Louis Symphony. There I also played with other great conductors like Solti, Leinsdorf, Monteux and others. It was fun to play the *Rhapsody in Blue* with Paul Whiteman and the *Grand Canyon Suite* with Ferde Grofé.

Shortly after I arrived in St. Louis I got a cold. I asked my new friend, Mike Burgio, who played second clarinet next to me, (he later joined the New York Philharmonic and we still keep in touch) if he could recommend a doctor. He sent me to a physician who also happened to play the violin. While the doctor examined me, he asked where I was from and where my family and I were during the Holocaust. I told him that I was in a forced labor camp and most of my family perished in Auschwitz. Luckily my father's life was saved by an American doctor while he was sick with typhoid fever in Dachau. As it turned out, this was the very doctor who had come in with the American troupes to liberate Dachau. He was the very man who set up the hospital and took care of my father and sent him to a sanatorium to recuperate. This was the man who saved my father's life!

In the summer of 1957 Muriel and I sailed to Europe. In four months we visited Holland, Belgium, France, Spain and Italy. We finished our vacation in London, England. Not counting the cost of the ship tickets, we left with \$1,000 and returned to America with the same amount in our pockets. To cover expenses, I sketched caricatures of tourists while posing as a local artist and speaking the language of the country. This, however, got me into some trouble in Venice. While Muriel was having ice cream at a cafe terrace on Piazza San Marco (whose owner I knew from my previous stay) I was sketching the tourists. A policeman, dressed all in white, was watching me for quite a while. When he noticed that I was charging the people for the caricatures he asked for my license. I told him that I didn't know I needed a license to draw as I was an American tourist. He didn't believe me, so I showed him my passport. He took it from me saying that it must be a phony passport and escorted me to the police station. There, I overheard him telling others that I was an Italian artist working at the Piazza San Marco without a license while passing myself off as an American tourist. My passport showed my birthplace as Romania. The captain knew that Romanians don't sound like they have foreign accents in Italy, so he finally let me go.

When we were on tour with the St. Louis Symphony, I had a bad scare one night before a concert in a small town. When I opened my trunk to change into my tails, I noticed that my bass clarinet was missing. Apparently I had forgotten to put it in the trunk the night before. I was frantic because I had many solos that night. There was no way I could borrow a bass clarinet in that small

town at that late hour. I panicked. Two minutes before the concert started, the stage manager handed me my missing clarinet. He found it on the piano the night before after I had left and wanted to teach me a lesson. He certainly did as this never happened again.

At the end of the third season, Mr. Golschman invited me to his apartment to show me his collection of paintings that he had acquired in Paris from his artist friends. The walls were filled with priceless impressionistic and post-impressionistic paintings. After touring his magnificent home, he made me an offer I couldn't refuse. He asked me to play for him in the Tulsa Philharmonic. The pay would be more for less work than in St. Louis. I accepted.

TULSA

At the airport in Tulsa, Muriel and I were met by the orchestra manager, the music critic of the newspaper and its photographer. After they took us to our hotel, we were treated to a tour of all the cultural sites of the city. The next day, two full pages of pictures and interviews appeared in the paper. Since then, we were treated like celebrities by the friendliest people we had ever met in the U.S.

Since the rehearsals were in the evenings, I registered at the University of Tulsa to study commercial art. I learned all the techniques used and my work was so well received that the teacher asked me to leave most of my work to show for future classes. I graduated after two years, but I hardly did any professional commercial art work. It was too confining for me. I prefer to sketch freely and spontaneously.

DENVER

I hated to leave Tulsa, but Mr. Saul Caston made me a better offer to join the Denver Symphony Orchestra. (Caston used to be principal trumpet and assistant conductor to Stokovsky of the Philadelphia Orchestra.) I accepted with the intent to return to Tulsa. Muriel was still playing concerts and returned to New York to study with a great teacher. She joined me later in Denver. We were apart for only six months, but I missed her terribly. My schedule in Denver was much busier with more concerts and the chamber music I have always enjoyed.

We often took trips to the Rocky Mountains, but the altitude didn't fare well with Muriel. She developed rheumatoid arthritis which she suffered particularly while playing the piano.

In the summer of 1961 we took a vacation to the west coast. On the way, we stopped in Las Vegas for a weekend to visit our friends, the Leibows. Stan used to play viola with the Denver Symphony. Muriel felt so well in the hot and dry climate of the desert that she didn't want to leave. After a month in Las Vegas, we continued our vacation in California. We visited San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Hearst's Castle. Two years later, in 1963, when my three year contract with the Denver Symphony expired, we moved to Las Vegas for good.

LAS VEGAS

When we arrived in Las Vegas in the summer of 1963, there was no symphony orchestra. There was not even a music school at the university. I had to make a living drawing caricatures in the hotels. (I usually made more money by sketching on the side, than with music.) I started a column in the Las Vegas Review-Journal, which I called "Carigraphures". The column featured my caricatures of showroom entertainers with a sample of their handwriting and my accompanying personality analysis. This exposure opened doors for me in the hotels. After two years I quit my column as I had become too busy sketching at conventions. Some of the celebrities I sketched took a personal interest in my career and were generous both personally and professionally.

In early 1964, Muriel and I gave our first recital in Las Vegas. Soon after I started a series of chamber music concerts with a group of fine musicians who played in the showrooms. I called it the "Nevada Chamber Ensemble". We played at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and in libraries and recorded almost all of our concerts. Luckily we didn't have to make a living with these concerts. Though the concerts were very well received, we would never have been able to support ourselves with classical music in such a small community, but musically it was satisfying. The chamber concert series lasted over twenty years until the University (which had, by that time, developed its own music department) began to give its own concerts.

Also, in 1964 I met a wonderful jazz musician, Tommy Vig. He was a child prodigy drummer in Budapest. (His father was a well know jazz clarinetist.) Tommy is an excellent vibraphone player, composer and band leader. I told him that I had chosen the clarinet so that I could play jazz, but I never got around to it. That's why I cannot improvise, but if it is written out I can play it. Tommy sat down and composed a tune with an improvisation written out on two pages. With Tommy at the piano I sight-read it easily. Laughingly he promised to compose for me a jazz concerto with the improvisations written out. Two years later we performed it at the showroom of Caesars Palace. It went over so well that Tommy wrote another jazz concerto which we played a year later again at Caesars Palace with the same 26 piece jazz band. Everybody thought that I was a jazz musician.

After fourteen years of marriage, our son David was born in 1967. This was the happiest moment of our lives. For the first time since I had left Sighet, I had a complete family again.

For many years I've been obsessed with improving the sound quality of the clarinet. After many experiments I invented a ligature that allows the entire reed to vibrate on the mouthpiece. In a traditional ligature, only half the reed vibrates due to the twin bands and screws. In my design, only a single screw was needed at the center of the reed. Consequently the sound would be bigger and the response easier. I got a patent pending and had prototypes made which I sent to colleagues in symphony orchestras. I also sent prototypes to the three famous clarinet and saxophone makers. The response was most favorable from all concerned. Two of the companies wrote to me that they were not in the business of making ligatures, but would be willing to buy them from me in large quantities. For this I needed capital which I did not have. There was an excellent review in the *Clarinet* magazine about my ligature compared to many others.

Although I did well with my sketching, it was not well enough to build a factory for clarinet and saxophone ligatures.

In 1978 I went to audition for the principal clarinet in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Before I left, Muriel told me that if I get the job and move to Chicago, she wouldn't be able to go with me. She and our son, David (at the time 11 years old) would have to stay in Las Vegas. Due to her rheumatoid arthritis, Muriel couldn't live in the cold, damp climate of Chicago. She had given up traveling and performing concerts to be with her family.

After three days of auditions, I was recalled to play in the finals for Sir George Solti. At that moment I had to choose between my family and my music career. Since I had no problem making a living as an artist, I chose to stay with my family. I didn't play in the finals, but I came home knowing that I was good enough for the job.

For thirty-five years I was a court interpreter in two languages. This gave me inside knowledge of the legal system. I have seen guilty criminals get away with murder and innocent people being punished.

In 1996 I got a steady job as a caricaturist in the Brown Derby restaurant at the MGM Grand Hotel. I was there for five years until I retired at the age of seventy-seven. At the same time I retired as a court interpreter.

CONCLUSION

My wife Muriel, who was born in Toronto, still teaches piano. A musical prodigy, she had been concertizing as a soloist with orchestras, recitals and chamber music since she was a child. Virtually every student she has entered into competitions has won first or second prize. The piano department of the University of Nevada Las Vegas sends their pedagogy and doctorate students to her in order to listen in on her teaching methods. I told Muriel that she should charge the university for her knowledge. She had herself studied with some of the best (and most expensive) teachers in the country. But she said that if even one person learns from her teaching, it's worth it to her.

Our son David is a talented set designer for the stage and works continually as a graphic designer. He was happily married for eight years to Debra Block, a highly respected and loved elementary school teacher. Debra died at the age of thirty-two when she fell from a cliff while hiking alone. Her death caused a painful void in our family and especially in David's life.

If that were not enough tragedy, we recently lost a cousin's daughter in the worst catastrophe in America. Arlene was working as a lawyer on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center. She left a husband with three children.

Looking back, I consider myself fortunate to have survived the Holocaust, to have found the girl of my dreams and to have a son I can be proud of. I hope that my music and art give some pleasure to people.

